

**Annual Report**  
**Montana State Special Education Advisory Panel**  
**July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004**



**Prepared by the Montana Office of Public Instruction  
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## **Chair's Report**

The State Special Education Advisory Panel had a very productive year. We reviewed statewide data on performance indicators for students with disabilities. We reviewed and approved the Annual Performance Report Under Part B of IDEA prior to its submission to the U.S. Department of Education. As a part of our activities, we invited personnel from other divisions within the Office of Public Instruction, as well as personnel from other agencies and programs, to share their knowledge and to assist in the identification of improvement strategies to improve student performance on specific indicators. Such discussions provided a rich foundation for the development of coordinated improvement strategies included in the Annual Performance Report.

John Copenhaver, Director of Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC), and Bob Runkel, Director of Special Education, met with new state special education advisory panel members immediately prior to the first panel meeting to familiarize them with previous Panel activities, availability of resources and the Panel's By-laws and procedures. This orientation was instrumental in ensuring that new members on the Panel had the necessary background information to fully participate in the activities of the Panel from the very first meeting.

An annual joint meeting with the state Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Council was held. During this meeting, the Panel participated in the 10-year celebration of regionalized CSPD in Montana and attended various presentations relating to professional development activities designed to improve student instruction and student outcomes.

Following much discussion, the Panel recommended that the Office of Public Instruction study the implications of providing free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students ages 19, 20, and 21.

The state is to be commended for its continuing commitment to the education of students with disabilities in Montana.

Submitted by:

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Karla Wohlwend, Chair  
Montana Special Education Advisory Panel

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Date

## **Overview**

In accord with CFR 300.650, of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Montana has established the Special Education Advisory Panel. The responsibilities of this state advisory panel are to:

- Advise the Office of Public Instruction of unmet needs within the state in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under Section 618 of the Act;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports under Part B of the Act;
- Advise the Office of Public Instruction in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and
- Advise on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons.

In addition to the above, the advisory panel serves as the steering/advisory committee for annual self-assessment activities and development of improvement strategies for Montana's Annual Performance Report under Part B of IDEA. In this capacity, the advisory panel, on a continuing basis, reviews statewide outcome data on key indicators for students with disabilities, advises the Office of Public Instruction on improvement strategies for improved outcomes and reviews progress on the key indicators on no less than an annual basis.

Following is the annual report of the panel for the 2003-2004 school year. During this reporting period, there were four scheduled meetings. A list of meeting dates, panel membership and a summary of panel activities are given below.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Montana Special Education Advisory Panel is formed of a broad representation of individuals with knowledge and expertise on needs of children with disabilities. Appointments to the panel are made by Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch on an annual basis for up to a maximum of a three-year term limit. Following is the 2003-2004 membership list of the panel and the areas they represented:

Russ Bean*	State/Local Administrator
Judith Herzog	Business Concerned With Transitions
Gwen Beyer	Part C/IDEA Representative
Norma Wadsworth	Higher Education
Patrice MacDonald**	Regular Classroom Teacher
Robert Maffit	State Agency
WyAnn Northrop	Teacher of Children with Disabilities
Gary Perleberg	Parent of a Child with Disabilities
Steve Gibson	Juvenile and Adult Corrections
Holly Raser	Legislator
Jeff Stelloh	Private School Representative
Hanna Fries	Student Representative
Karla Wohlwend***	Special Education, Program Administrator

\* Incoming Chair  
 \*\* Secretary  
 \*\*\* Panel Chair

## MEETINGS

The Special Education Advisory Panel met in Helena four times during state fiscal year FY'04 on the following dates.

October 23-24, 2003  
 April 29-30, 2004

February 5-6, 2004  
 June 4, 2004

Notices of panel meetings were sent to local newspapers and placed on the Office of Public Instruction's Web site. A public comment period was made available at each meeting and accommodations provided, when requested.

## PANEL FOCUS

The panel focused its activities this year on two primary areas:

Self-Assessment of performance on key indicators of the Annual Performance Report; and

Improvement Planning.

In addition, the panel had presentations on topics that were of immediate relevance to improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

To assist the panel in its work, guest speakers were invited to provide presentations on relevant topics and to participate in discussion of the issues. Presentations were made on the following:

- General Supervision Enhancement Grant: This grant is intended to support the state's efforts to improve education accountability through improvements in the collection, analysis and reporting of data.
- Monitoring: Compliance and Focused Intervention: Policies, procedures and activities for conducting Compliance Monitoring and Focused Intervention.
- Big Horn Teacher Project: This project is hosted at MSU-Billings. Its primary mission is to advocate for Native Americans who are pursuing a teaching degree or enhancing their profession. The project delivers special education coursework via distance education to 21 teachers.
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD0): Training activities and projects implemented through CSPD focused on improving student outcomes. Training activities and projects included, but are not limited to: Mentoring, Montana Behavioral Initiative, Paraprofessional training, special education endorsement project, differentiated instruction (We Teach All) and the speech-language pathology stipend program.
- Medicaid Refinancing:
- Criterion Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alt): Review of student performance and issues relevant to assessment for students with disabilities.
- Performance Indicator Data: Performance indicators as a part of the Annual Performance Report.
- Severe Communications Program: A cooperative educational program in Flathead County, based on the TEECH model, to address the instructional needs of young children with Autism.
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB): The requirements of NCLB and its implications for students with disabilities.
- Early Childhood Initiative: A multi-agency effort to review and make recommendations for addressing the needs of young children. One of the recommendations is for full-day kindergarten.
- Mandt Training: Specialized training for school personnel. It teaches a gradual and graded system of alternatives for interacting with students, with the goal being the reduction of potential for injury to all involved.
- Deaf-Blind Project:
- American Indian Drop-Out Prevention Project: This project assists American Indian students in graduating from high school by implementing a research-based design at the state level and in six demonstration schools.
- HIV/AIDS/STD Awareness: Discussion and review of the "2003 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Students with Disabilities" publication.
- Complaints/Due Process Annual Summary: Report and discussion of Complaints/Due process data.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 2003-2004 SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL**

In its role as the advisory/steering committee for the self-assessment process and the Annual Performance Report under Part B of IDEA, the Panel:

- Reviewed statewide data on performance indicators for students with disabilities;
- Held a joint meeting with the State Council for Comprehensive System of Personnel Development for the purpose of reviewing and making joint recommendations for professional development activities designed to improve instruction and student outcomes;
- Heard presentations and participated in discussions on issues affecting the outcomes for students with disabilities;
- Reviewed and did not recommend any changes to the Annual Performance Report Under Part B of IDEA prior to its submission to the U.S. Department of Education.
- Made a recommendation to the Office of Public Instruction that it study the implications of providing free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students ages 19, 20 and 21.

Karla Wohlwend, panel chair, attended the Office of Special Education Programs Leadership (OSEP) Conference in Washington, D.C., in May 2003.

### **Recognition**

The panel wishes to recognize the following individuals for their presentations and provision of resource materials to assist the panel in its work:

John Copenhaver, Director, MPRRC

Office of Public Instruction Staff

Robert Runkel	Marilyn Pearson
Marlene Wallis	Susan Bailey-Anderson
Frank Podobnik	Dick Trerise
Francisco Roman	Nikki Sandve
Doug Doty	Dan McCarthy
Mike Chapman	Pat Reichert
Nancy Coopersmith	Dan McCarthy
BJ Granbery	Ann Verploegen
Lori Falcon	Susan Court

Gail McGregor, University of Montana—Rural Institute

Dennis Moore, Director, Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK)

Sue Paulson, Director, Flathead Valley Cooperative and Evergreen Schools

Netti Musahl, Special Education Teacher, Flathead Valley Autism Program

State Comprehensive System Of Personnel Development Council Members

Marlene Wallis, Office of Public Instruction, for the support she provided to the panel by taking excellent minutes, providing materials and making meeting arrangements.